7/1/20 Devotional

Let us meditate upon the following story from the Gospel of Matthew.

*“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,” Jesus said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when Peter saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me.”*

Matthew 14:22-33

An excerpt from an article states how risk-taking activities are becoming a big business.

*"Adrenaline holidays are moving from a niche market to a mainstream …. Danger is an international business. Parachutists and hang-gliders and skydivers float through the skies, rock-climbers cling to sheer faces and skiers are dropped from helicopters. In the rainforests, the daring explore canopies on zip wires. In the oceans, people swim with sharks or free-dive without oxygen.”*

Why do people intentionally seek out risky, fear-based activities? The article states: *"It's an escape from the mundane and the routine. We need risks to feel fully human, fully alive. It's about joy and intensity. It's about a drive for excitement. If we remove risk from our lives, we never find our strengths and weaknesses. We stagnate."*

What risks have you taken in your life? Do you regret taking them or are you glad you did?

We know well that life is filled with risks. We also know that taking risks is an important aspect of living an authentic life. We would never have anything or accomplish anything worthwhile if we were always risk averse. No new relationships would be formed. No new inventions would be designed. No new communities would be built. No new companies would be formed. No one would get married or dare to have children.

From the perspective of our faith, taking risks is like getting out of the boat and trying to walk on water. In our story from Matthew the disciple Peter, seeing Jesus, and wanting to go to him, makes the bold decision to get out of the boat. There were no lifeguards sitting in towers, no rescue boats nearby to save him if he ran into trouble. The disciples are at least for the moment, safe in the boat. Jesus is standing on shore. The wind and the waves are pounding against the boat. Jesus goes out to them walking on water. The disciples are terrified. They cry out, thinking they are seeing a ghost. Jesus says to them: *“Take heart, have courage. It is I. Do not be afraid.”*

The disciple Peter calls out, *“Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.” “Come,”* Jesus says to Peter. Peter climbs out of the boat and starts to walk on the water toward Jesus. But the wind kicks up and Peter grows afraid, starts to sink and cries out “*Lord, save me.” T*aking risks like getting out of boats and trying to walk on water is a frightening prospect. Immediately Jesus reaches out his hand and catches Peter. *“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”*  After climbing back into the boat, the wind dies down. Then the disciples fall to their knees and worship Jesus saying, *“Truly you are the Son of God.”*

Jesus said “Come” to Peter. I believe this story is saying that God wants us to get out of boats and try walking on water. Jesus wants us to take risks for him. Further, the story is saying that God is with us during such times.

Can you think of a time you took a risk for the Lord? Can you think of a time when you felt that God was with you when you got out of a boat? Following Christ involves risk-taking? God calls the church, the Body of Christ, to take risks? Following Jesus implies the willingness to take risks for him. When we dedicate our life to Jesus, we are saying we will take risks to witness to him. Obedience to God and spiritual growth, means being willing to try new things, to step out of our comfort-zone. There is no spiritual growth if we always decide to play it safe. Witnessing to Jesus involves pushing our limits. This is an aspect of the Christian life. Risk-taking always involves dealing with fear: the fear of failure, harm, embarrassment or regret. It requires courage and courage is never totally devoid of fear. Fear, nervousness, doubts are aspects of courage. Taking risks for Christ means trusting in him in spite of feeling afraid.

God knows we deal daily with the challenge of faithfully witnessing to Christ. And witnessing means dealing with a dichotomy: the desire for safety and comfort on the one hand and on the other, the desire to take risks in the name of Jesus Christ.

How long has it been since you took a risk for God? God is worth taking risks for. Christ desires for His followers, like Peter, to take risks. Is God calling you to get out of the boat?

The Lord’s blessings be with you,

Rev. Alan W. Deuel

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